HOMOSEXUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE.

WORK IS THE REFUGE OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE NOTHING BETTER TO DO.

- OSCAR WILDE

WHETHER WE LIKE IT OR NOT, MOST OF US HAVE TO WORK. OUR OCCUPATIONS PRESENT A CERTAIN DILEMMA: THEY ARE OUR BONDAGE, BUT THEY GIVE US MUCH OF OUR IDENTITY AND ALLOW US TO BE MORE THAN JUST BYSTANDERS IN SOMEBODY ELSE'S WORLD. MY PRESENT POSITION AS A COMPUTER TECHNICIAN FOR A LOCAL MARKETING FIRM IS NOT NECESSARILY THE JOB I'VE ALWAYS ENVISIONED MYSELF IN (ITINERANT D.J.'S SPECIALIZING IN ABBA CLASSICS DON'T MAKE THE BIG BUCKS), BUT IT IS ENGAGING AND I WORK WITH SOME GENUINELY NICE PEOPLE. THE DAILY CHALLENGES OF THE WORKPLACE ARE SHARED BY ALL; BUT, I BELIEVE THAT THERE ARE PERPLEXITIES UNIQUE TO ME AS A GAY MALE.

MANY GAYS AND LESBIANS FACE VERY REAL THREATS TO THEIR EXISTANCE WITHIN THE WORKPLACE. DEPENDING ON THE JOB ENVIRONMENT, FEARS CAN VARY FROM THAT OF BEING STEREOTYPED AS THE "OFFICE GAY" TO LOSING ONE'S JOB. GAY MEN AND WOMEN WHO WORK WITH CHILDREN AS TEACHERS OR SOCIAL WORKERS ARE PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE TO IRRATIONAL AND UNTRUE CHARACTERIZATIONS OF HOMOSEXUALS AS CHILD MOLESTERS. BUT, FOR SOME, THE WORKPLACE ALSO PROVIDES OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRODUCTIVE DIALOGUE. THE VALUE OF THESE DISCUSSIONS, EVEN IF THEY MAY ONLY OCCUR WITH ONE OR TWO CLOSE ACQUAINTANCES, CANNOT BE UNDERESTIMATED. A SINCERE EXPRESSION OF IDEAS FROM A GAY OR LESBIAN

OVER

COWORKER CAN STIMULATE POSITIVE CHANGES IN WAYS NOT EVEN ANTICIPATED.

FINALLY, HERE ARE A FEW GENERAL PRINCIPLES THAT MIGHT BE USED TO CREATE YOUR OWN WORKPLACE ETHIC.

- WORK IS WORK; TO SUCCESSFULLY FULFILL THE REQUIREMENTS OF MOST JOBS, IT IS IMPORTANT TO KEEP OUR PERSONAL JOYS AND STRUGGLES SEPARATE FROM THE TASKS FACING US. WE HAVE NO RIGHT TO ASK OUR COWORKERS TO BE INVOLVED IN OUR PERSONAL LIVES.

- IF YOU CHOOSE TO BE OPEN ABOUT YOUR SEXUALITY, BE CONFIDENT IN YOUR OWN IDENTITY. REMEMBER THAT IN THE MINDS OF MANY, WHETHER IT IS FAIR OR NOT, YOU HAVE MADE YOURSELF A REPRESENTATIVE OF ALL GAY AND LESBIAN PEOPLE.

- BE UNDERSTANDING OF OTHER PEOPLE'S CONCERNS OR QUESTIONS. PATIENT PERSEVERANCE, THOUGH AT TIMES FRUSTRATING, IS THE BEST WAY TO OVERCOME CONFUSION AND IGNORANCE.

- ANONOMYS